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MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
September 20, 2007

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force has been tasked with refueling US and other foreign naval vessels in the Indian Ocean under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law to back up their antiterror drive

in Afghanistan. To continue the MSDF's refueling mission, or not to continue it? That is a heavy challenge facing Japan's next prime minister to be elected shortly. However, Japan will have to call off the MSDF mission unless the antiterror law is extended beyond its Nov. 1 expiry. It would be difficult to resume the MSDF's refueling activities within the year. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party is already anticipating such a situation in its ongoing presidential race.

LDP Secretary General Taro Aso: "It's difficult to extend the law."

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda: "I basically agree..."

The two LDP presidential candidates sounded alike as they met the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan yesterday.

The new prime minister is expected to come into office on Sept. 25. There is a little over one month left thereafter until the antiterror law's Nov. 1 expiry. Meanwhile, the Diet is timetabled to close its current extraordinary session on Nov. 10. The days are not enough. The Tokiwa, an MSDF supply ship currently in the Indian

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Ocean, is certain to be recalled. The focus will be on how and when to create an agreement between the ruling and opposition parties to resume the MSDF's refueling activities.

Aso has plans to present a new legislative measure to the Diet during its current extra session. The Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) and other opposition parties currently hold a majority of the seats in the House of Councillors. The Diet's opposition-controlled upper chamber would vote down the legislation. After that, the House of Representatives, currently dominated by the ruling parties, will take a second vote on the legislation to enact it into law with a majority of two thirds. Aso is in a position to go for the fastest track to resume the MSDF's refueling activities.

Meanwhile, Fukuda, now gaining an advantage over Aso in the race, differs from Aso.

"We have no choice but to work together with the DPJ in a cooperative manner. We spent time for the party's presidential election, so we have a limited number of options." This remark came from Fukuda on Sept. 14.

On Sept. 16, Fukuda said, "I really don't know for now (about whether it is possible to prepare for a new law)." He also said: "Taking a second vote (in the Diet's lower chamber) is the last of all means. That's a rare case."

Instead of Fukuda, former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki has come out with a scenario that differs from Aso's. Fukuda was chief cabinet secretary when Yamasaki was LDP secretary general. They worked to create the antiterror law after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. The two are also keeping step with each other on Yasukuni Shrine and North Korea. Yamasaki is one of those who were quickest to field Fukuda in the party race.

Yamasaki said in his faction's meeting on Sept. 14: "Japan will have to call off the MSDF's refueling activities. The United States also knows that. The problem is that we will have to make it acceptable to the DPJ. DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa says we need a resolution from the United Nations. Then, it's all right to get a new resolution for participation, as he says. In that case, it will take quite a long time to create a new law. One idea is to extend the Diet session until the end of the year to ram through the bill. However, we should not do such a foolish thing. Instead, we should carry it over to the ordinary Diet session next year, and then we should pass the legislation through talks."

Fukuda has also hinted at the possibility of dissolving the Diet through talks after the budget for next fiscal year gets Diet approval. Fukuda is tuned in with Yamasaki on when and how to resume the MSDF's refueling activities. Prime Minister Abe staked his job on continuing the MSDF's refueling mission, and he was driven to step down. If Fukuda comes into office as prime minister, will the

situation change?

Japan has joined the international community's efforts in the war on terror over the past six years since the Sept. 11 events. Now, Japan is facing a challenge.

4) Continuation of MSDF refueling operation: LDP works for adoption of new UNSC resolution, with "gratitude resolution" to be adopted today

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YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
September 20, 2007

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is to adopt in the early hours of Sept. 20 (Japan time) a resolution that includes appreciation for Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces' (MSDF) participation in the Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) in the Indian Ocean. Behind the inclusion are secret moves by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) following its crushing defeat in the Upper House election held in late July.

LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa, Foreign Minister Aso at the time and former Foreign Minister Machimura took the initiative in the move. They worked on Vice Foreign Minister Yachi and others, noting: "It is now difficult to extend the MSDF mission because the ruling and opposition parties have traded places in the Upper House. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) would find it impossible to oppose an extension if there is a UN resolution that can serve as the basis for its operation."

Yachi at first showed reluctance to accepting the idea, noting, "The MSDF's refueling operation has been internationally acknowledged. There is sufficient legitimacy in their mission. It would be difficult for Japan, which is not a UNSC member, to have it adopt a new resolution for domestic reasons."

Nevertheless, the LDP insisted on securing a UN resolution, because it was aware that an extension of the MSDF mission is a major issue that could shake the Abe administration. In the end, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) began strongly working on related countries in New York starting in late August. The key to settling this issue was a resolution for deciding on an extension of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), whose establishment expires in mid-October. The secret scheme was to propose correcting the preamble of that resolution and instead including Japan's request.

Russia, a UNSC member, opposed the idea most strongly, noting that the reason for adding the maritime interdiction operations was unclear. Germany, which has suffered many losses of their ISAF members, opposed Japan's request, saying that it is not acceptable for Japan to make a request regarding the ISAF resolution for domestic reasons. However, the trend for adopting the resolution was set with the US and Britain acting on behalf of the continuation of Japan's refueling operations.

5) UN to adopt new antiterrorism resolution today; Government aims to quickly introduce new law to extend MSDF refueling mission

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
September 20, 2007

In a bid to extend the refueling mission of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) in the Indian Ocean, the government intends to swiftly prepare new legislation based on a new resolution expected to be adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Sept. 19, local time. On the strength of approval from the UN, the government hopes to enact a law at an early date. The Democratic Party of Japan, though, has not eased its opposition to the MSDF refueling mission. Under such a situation, it will be difficult to enact a law by the end of the year. Some suggest extending the current extraordinary Diet session, which is due to be adjourned on

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Nov. 10, until early next year.

The new UNSC resolution is designed to extend the antiterrorism mission in Afghanistan by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for another year. At the request of the Japanese government, the resolution includes in the preamble a phrase expressing appreciation for maritime intercept operations (MIO) by the multinational naval force in the Indian Ocean. Even so, the resolution is aimed to extend the ISAF mission and is not intended solely to approve MIO, which is joined by the MSDF and is aimed to prevent terrorists from transiting the Indian Ocean.

Key points in the new UNSC resolution

(Preamble)

- ? Express concern about the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly about the rise in terrorist acts by Taliban fighters and Al-Qaeda members.
- ? Emphasize the need for continued international efforts by the ISAF and the multinational force participating in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).
- ? Welcome the completion of the ISAF deployment across Afghanistan and its continued cooperation in OEF.
- ? Expresses appreciation for the leadership demonstrated by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the contributions by the ISAF and many countries in OEF, including MIO.

(Text)

- ? Extend the ISAF mission by 12 months beyond Oct. 13 in 2007.
- ? Allow the participant countries in the ISAF to use every necessary means to achieve their missions.

6) Prime Minister Abe explained plan on new UN antiterrorism resolution to President Bush

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
September 20, 2007

The Japanese government prepared a plan to insert in a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution a phrase expressing appreciation for the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling mission, keeping in mind public opinion and the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) opposition to extending the MSDF mission. This strategy was pushed ahead more smoothly than expected by persons concerned, owing to cooperation between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and United States President Bush, both of who have been driven into corner over the war against terrorism.

The plan emerged in the government in early September, just after the DPJ launched a new leadership in preparation for fighting the ruling camp. Meanwhile, some members called for caution about the proposal. One member said: "If the expression of appreciation is linked to a resolution aimed to extend the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Japan's operation might be taken as involving the use of force." Another said: "The government has explained that Japan's operation is based on a past UN resolution. If the plan is turned into action, it will be inconsistent with the conventional explanation."

Although many remained cautious, there was no other good idea. The Foreign Ministry unofficially asked UNSC members for their views about the plan through local embassies and received favorable replies from them. In the Japan-US summit held on Sept. 8 on the

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sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Sydney, as well, Prime Minister Abe explained to President Bush the plan to insert appreciation in a UNSC resolution, seeking his cooperation.

In the US government, there is strong concern that if Japan withdraws from the war against terrorism, Pakistan, which is the sole participant among Islamic countries and whose naval ships have been refueled by Japan, might also leave the front lines. The president, who has been in a great quandary over the Iraq war, promptly accepted Japan's request, according to informed sources.

7) UNSC to adopts resolution "thanking" nations apparently in response to Japan's strong appeal

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
September 20, 2007

Yu Koyama

It has been decided to include in a United Nations resolution on operations in Afghanistan an expression of appreciation for nations, including Japan, participating in the ongoing antiterrorism missions in that country. This move reflects the Japanese government's pressure on the UN to provide a good reason for Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) to continue its refueling mission -- which is to expire on Nov. 1 -- in the Indian Ocean. The government used the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) argument against continuing the MSDF's refueling mission because of the lack of any UN resolution giving approval to that mission against the party. Taking advantage of this resolution, the government and the ruling coalition intend to stimulate public opinion and gain the advantage over the DPJ.

The MSDF has been engaged in the refueling mission under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. Internationally, this mission is seen as part of "Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)" led by the Coalition of the Willing, composed mainly of US troops. An idea of including appreciation for nations participating in the antiterrorism campaign in a UN resolution came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). MOFA has lobbied the UN Security Council (UNSC) member nations to include appreciation in a resolution since the start of this month. A senior MOFA official explained: "It is safe to say that this idea was in effect aimed at convincing the DPJ."

The government has used UNSC Resolution 1368 calling on "the international community to make even more efforts to prevent terrorism" adopted in September 2001 as the grounds for operations under OEF. But the DPJ has contended that such operations are not specifically mentioned in the resolution." The DPJ has been opposed to the MSDF's refueling mission.

Behind MOFA's energetic lobbying was the domestic situation where given the reversal of the positions in the Upper House between the ruling and opposition parties, the government needs to obtain the DPJ's approval for continuing the MSDF's refueling mission. A senior MOFA official explained that if a resolution expressing "appreciation for nations participating in operations under OEF, including maritime interdiction operation," and a "need for continued operations," is adopted, "the DPJ will lose the grounds for its opposition."

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In the ministry, however, someone noted, "The resolution bill is related to the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) missions, and it is not directly giving any grounds to operations under OEF. Whether the resolution can serve as a material to convince the DPJ is still questionable." Given this, it remains to be seen whether MOFA's lobbying will bear fruit.

8) New UN resolution: DPJ to watch public opinion attentively, while remaining opposed to continuation of refueling operation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
September 20, 2007

The UN Security Council is expected to adopt a resolution including appreciative words for the multinational maritime interdiction operations (MIO) in the Indian Ocean, in which the Maritime Self-Defense Force is taking part. Despite that, the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) decided yesterday to continue opposing the MSDF's refueling operation, saying the content of the resolution does not provide any clear grounds for the MSDF operation. At the same time, there is a view in the DPJ that the party must study a flexible response by discerning

public trends as the responsible largest party in the House of Councillors. The government and ruling parties are watching carefully how public opinion affects the DPJ's response.

Regarding the UN resolution, DPJ Policy Research Committee Chairman Masayuki Naoshima said in yesterday's press conference: "A resolution simply expressing appreciation will not be able to change our thinking." Deputy President Seiji Maehara, who supports an extension of the MSDF mission, also indicated before the press corps that the new UN resolution would be insufficient, saying: "A resolution authorizing the MIO is necessary. The government must explain to the public what effect it will have (on the refueling mission)."

The government has explained that the Antiterrorism Law, which has been serving as the basis for the MSDF mission, has a seal of approval from the United Nations by citing UN Security Council Resolution 1368 that recognized 9/11 as a threat to international peace and security and Resolution 1267 that urged UN member countries to take antiterrorism measures.

Meanwhile, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa has clearly opposed an extension of the refueling mission, saying that the war on terrorism in and around Afghanistan is America's war of self-defense and that there has been no UN resolution directly requesting the MSDF's refueling operation.

At the same time, some in the DPJ have begun paying attention to public trends. A DPJ lawmaker specialized in national defense took this view: "Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda is a seasoned politician, and we need Diet measures distinct from those of the Abe administration. If public opinion gradually supports the refueling mission, the DPJ might find itself isolated."

Some DPJ lawmakers, including Akihisa Nagashima, have given positive assessments to the government's efforts for the additional UN resolution. It remains to be seen which side -- the government and ruling parties or the DPJ -- can win public support.

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9) DPJ remains adamantly opposed to extension of MSDF mission

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
September 20, 2007

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) intends to oppose an extension of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operation in the Indian Ocean even if the UN Security Council adopts a new resolution. The DPJ's view is that a new resolution to express "appreciation" for antiterrorism operations will still not be direct authorization by the United Nations, which President Ichiro Ozawa has called for. Even former President Seiji Maehara, who has expressed his understanding for the MSDF mission, has reacted negatively, saying: "I feel it is a makeshift measure."

Ozawa yesterday directed Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka that the party should adhere to its opposition to the government's plan to extend the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, even a new resolution is adopted. He told Yamaoka: "It's not germane. The Constitution and the Japan-US Security Treaty cannot be tricked by expressions of appreciation."

The DPJ's Foreign Affairs and Defense Division confirmed yesterday that even if a new resolution was adopted, the party would "laughingly dismiss it." Yoshiro Hachiro, foreign minister of the Next Cabinet, told reporters: "The UN resolution will not at all directly single out the antiterrorism operations in which the MSDF has participated." Keiichiro Asao, defense minister of the Next Cabinet, also said: "We will not change our opposition."

It seems that the more DPJ lawmakers know about the contents of the UN resolution, the more they have strengthened their opposition. In response to an interview by Nikkei, Maehara pointed out: "It is desirable to directly ask the public as to whether they support or not. It is not fair to try to change the mood of the public by a UN

resolution expressing appreciation." Another DPJ lawmaker also made a critical comment: "It is unusual to use the United Nations for internal politics."

10) DPJ sticking to its position opposing MSDF refueling services in the Indian Ocean, despite a UN resolution of appreciation

TOKYO (Page 2) (Excerpts)
September 20, 2007

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) has eagerly rejected a new United Nations Security Council resolution on the anti-terrorist mop-up operations in Afghanistan. The reason is if the mood of the public swings based on the resolution and public approval of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's continuing operations in the Indian Ocean rises, the party, which has consistently been against the refueling services,

The essence of new UNSC resolution would clearly express appreciation for the coalition of the willing, including Japan, for carrying out Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) under the US lead, and would cite the need to continue OEF operations.

Until now, the government has cited as the grounds for the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) refueling operations an ordinary UN resolution that criticizes terrorism and includes in it a request for cooperation to punish terrorist organizations. The new

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resolution, if adopted, would come in the form of adding to the grounds and the legitimacy of the refueling operations. With this, the government hopes to get the DPJ, as the largest party in the Upper House, to reverse its policy course.

However, DPJ leaders have stressed the party will stick to its opposition to the refueling activities until the end. Policy Board Chairman Masayuki Uejima at a press conference stressed, "Our thinking has not changed a bit." Next Cabinet Foreign Minister Yoshiro Hachiro noted that since the expression of appreciation is in the resolution's preamble, "It is not at all proper stipulation for OEF activities in a UN resolution."

DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama criticized the resolution as a "farce," citing open lobbying by the Japanese government to continue refueling activities.

11) DPJ to submit bill scrapping Iraq Reconstruction Assistance Law to Upper House: Information disclosure eyed

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
September 20, 2007

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) yesterday decided to submit to the Upper House during the extraordinary Diet session a bill scrapping the Iraq Reconstruction Assistance Special Measures Law aimed at an immediate pullout of Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) troops from Iraq, where they are engaging in an airlift mission for multinational forces. The party is set to pursue the government over insufficient information disclosure and the legitimacy of the dispatch of ASDF personnel to Iraq as well as the propriety of continuing the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) mission for refueling in the Indian Ocean, when Diet debate starts after the election of a new prime minister.

The DPJ is opposing the dispatch of SDF personnel to Iraq, noting that it is doubtful whether the SDF mission is relevant for the reconstruction of Iraq and that information disclosure by the government is also extremely insufficient. The DPJ has so far introduced a bill scrapping the law three times. Now that the opposition is the dominant force in the Upper House, the DPJ will aim at having the bill adopted in the Upper House first and then securing its adoption and passage in the Lower House with the consent of the ruling camp.

The government intends to submit a bill approving the dispatch of MSDF troops during the extraordinary Diet session. However,

suspecting that MSDF ships refueled US vessels heading for Iraq, the DPJ plans to seek the disclosure of related data and to exercise administrative investigation rights.

Government denies diversion of fuel

Regarding the MSDF refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, the government in a written answer adopted at a cabinet meeting denied refueling vessels heading for the Iraq operation, noting that MSDF personnel confirm each time they provide refueling service that concerned vessels are engaging in activities stipulated under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. The reply was made in response to a memorandum on questions submitted by Upper House member Shinkun Haku of the DPJ.

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12) Online poll: Fukuda backed by middle-aged, Aso by young people

TOKYO (Page 2) (Abridged)
September 20, 2007

The Tokyo Shimbun's recent online poll of political monitors, the results of which were tabulated yesterday, shows what strata support former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Taro Aso, who are running in the LDP presidential race. The survey also shows the public's severe view of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has now announced his resignation.

In popularity rating, Fukuda stood at 40.1 PERCENT , with Aso at 18.2 PERCENT . However, 36.1 PERCENT had no expectations for the two.

Among those who picked Fukuda, those in their 20s and 30s accounted for 37.6 PERCENT , and those aged 40 and over at 62.4 PERCENT . Meanwhile, among those who opted for Aso, the total proportion of those in their 20s and 30s was 43.8 PERCENT , and those aged 40 and over at 56.3 PERCENT . Among those who support Fukuda, there are comparatively many middle-aged and elderly people. Among those who support Aso, there are many young people.

Respondents were also asked who they thought would be appropriate for prime minister. To this question, Ichiro Ozawa, president of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), ranked top. More than one third of the respondents named DPJ lawmakers, including two DPJ vice presidents, Katsuya Okada and Naoto Kan. Fukuda ranked second, and Aso in third place.

13) Poll: Online monitors, LDP local execs differ on priority issues

TOKYO (Top play) (Abridged)
September 20, 2007

The Tokyo Shimbun conducted a questionnaire survey of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's local chapter executives prior to the LDP's presidential election in the wake of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's announcement of his resignation. In addition, the Tokyo Shimbun also conducted an online poll of 500 political monitors. The LDP's local executives want the new prime minister (LDP president) to correct the nation's social divide, while the online monitors want the next premier to fast-track policy measures for pensions. The monitors also want the House of Representatives to be dissolved at an early date for a general election. However, the LDP's local chapters want the next premier to move down a Diet dissolution.

14) Fukuda, Aso address foreign press club

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
September 20, 2007

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and incumbent Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Taro Aso, who are running in the LDP presidential election, yesterday delivered speeches at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan. Fukuda stressed: "The next prime minister will be required to carry out reforms for the benefit

of the daily lives of the people. Measures will be needed to wipe away the public's anxiety." He expressed his eagerness to correct problems caused by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's reform

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drive.

Aso referred to the negative side of the Koizumi reform program, saying: "It is clear that no achievement was made in local area reforms," adding, "I would like to promote effective reform in the e-government area."

The two shared the perception that the issue of extending the Maritime Self-Defense Forces' refueling operation in the Indian Ocean should be resolved by new legislation.

15) Japan War-Bereaved Families Association to support Fukuda

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
September 19, 2007

The Japan War-Bereaved Families Association, which is a strong support organization for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), will decide in a meeting today of its directors to back former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda in the LDP presidential election. The association and Fukuda share the view that various problems caused by the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals in Yasukuni Shrine should be resolved in some way. Chairman Makoto Koga, a former LDP secretary general, was quick to support Fukuda. He will confirm

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today the decision by the directors in a second study session on the separating of Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni.

As Fukuda compiled a report calling for creating a new national cemetery when he was serving as chief cabinet secretary, there is a possibility that debate on the Yasukuni issue would be pushed ahead if he assumes the prime minister's post. The association has opposed the idea of building a national cemetery, but a study of removing Class-A war criminals from the Shinto shrine is aimed at urging Yasukuni Shrine to change its stance. There is a hidden motive of promoting debate on a removal of Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni by debating construction of a new national cemetery.

16) Koga's influence strengthening in LDP

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
September 20, 2007

Makoto Koga, a former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who heads a faction in the LDP, has promoted his political presence. He led the move to field former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda in the ongoing LDP presidential race, setting

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the trend favorable to Fukuda. Koga's influence will likely grow in a Fukuda government.

Koga said: "My political belief is closer to that of Fukuda than Secretary General Taro Aso's." He cited Fukuda's policy toward Asia

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and a policy of placing importance on the daily lives of people as reasons for his support for Fukuda. He has set up the election taskforce team in a Tokyo hotel on his own (for Fukuda).

Despite the sudden presidential election, Koga was quick to take action. Following Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's announcement of his intention to resign, Koga held on the evening of Sept. 12 a general meeting of his faction. He soon made contact with Taku Yamasaki, former LDP vice president, and Sadakazu Tanigaki, former finance minister, winning their support for Fukuda. A senior Koga faction member stressed: "Since our faction first voiced support for Fukuda,

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other factions decided to back him."

Koga and Yuya Niwa first co-chaired the faction since June 2006. However, Niwa left the faction after assuming the post of the LDP General Council chairman last September. So Koga became the faction's chairman last October. He has made efforts to take over the faction. Niwa appears to be supporting Aso, but few faction members will likely follow him. The dominant view is that Niwa's clout will inevitably decline as the possibility of Fukuda becoming the next prime minister is now certain.

There may be a change in the Koga faction's strategy.

Kota is positive about a merger with the Tanigaki faction, aiming at forming a middle-size Kochikai, while Niwa has advocated the notion of creating a grand Kochikai. There is a view that if Niwa's influence weakens, the idea of forming a middle-size Kochikai will be pushed forward quickly.

17) Did former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa know about Prime Minister Abe's intention to resign?

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September 20, 2007

Although the "coup d'etat" rumor is that Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Tao Aso ultimately forced Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to step down. Yosano has fought back, indicating that former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa also knew of Abe's decision. Nakagawa called at the Prime Minister's Official Residence to meet Abe on Sept. 11, the day before Abe announced his resignation.

Regarding this point, Yosano stated at a press conference yesterday: "It is true that he met with the prime minister. So it would not be strange if the prime minister had told him his intention to quit."

Asked about this by reporters, Yosano responded: "It can be said that the prime minister wanted to convey his intention in some fashion on Sept. 10 or 11. But I failed to sense it," saying that he heard Abe's intention to step down for the first time on the 12th. He also underscored: "There is nothing wrong with a little media skirmish over information, but moderation is needed. Otherwise, the LDP will lose public confidence."

Asked by reporters whether the coup rumor was slanderous, Yosano replied, "That's right."

On Sept. 11, New Komeito leader Akihiro Ota, too, met with Abe. Yosano clearly stated that Ota did not know about Abe's intention.

SCHIEFFER